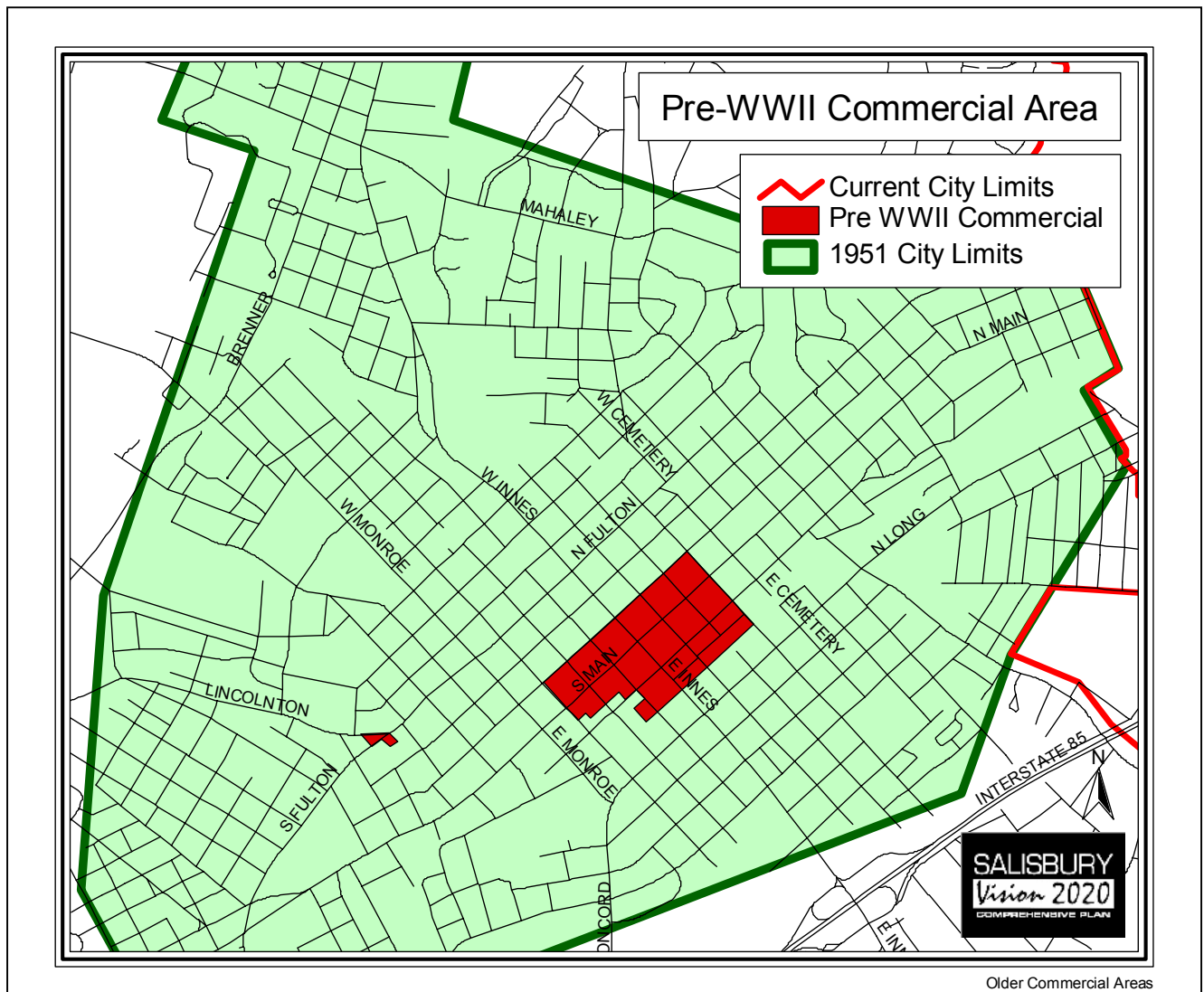


# Commercial Areas

As addressed in this master plan, *commercial areas* may include a broad spectrum of non-residential and non-heavy-industrial activities. Thus, this section addresses not only customary retail establishments, but also offices, workshops, small-scale assembly operations, and other commercial enterprises. Also, for purposes of analysis and policy development, it is useful to distinguish between those commercial areas that were developed prior to World War II (**Older Commercial Areas**), and those that were developed from after the war to the present day (**Newer, Existing Commercial Areas**). Generally speaking pre-war commercial areas are *pedestrian oriented*, while post-war commercial areas are *automobile-oriented*. Finally, the chapter concludes with policies for future commercial development in Salisbury (**Commercial Areas Yet to Be**).

## OLDER COMMERCIAL AREAS



### ***Summary of Issues***



When we speak of Salisbury's older commercial areas, we are largely concerned with the traditional downtown area. Salisbury's downtown has all the features of a typical pre-war commercial district: multi-story buildings pulled up to the sidewalk, a clear pedestrian orientation, streets in front and alleys to the rear, a predominance of on-street parking, modest signage mounted directly on the buildings, and a diverse mixture of retail businesses, restaurants, institutions and apartments. Access to the area reflects a balance of transportation modes, including automobiles, public transit, and walking.

In addition to the downtown area, there are a number of other pre-war, pedestrian-oriented commercial areas worth mentioning. The Chestnut Hill commercial area of South Fulton Street between Lincolnton Road and Johnson Street, for example, came into being at about the same time that the Fulton Heights neighborhood was developed, providing customers close at hand. Today, these same buildings are occupied by a photography studio, a fabric store and a uniform supply business.

Also at the south end of town, near Chestnut Hill, is a small cluster of businesses located in the 800 block of South Main Street. These 1920's era buildings were once on the main trolley line between Fulton Heights and the Spencer Shops. Businesses located there today include a fitness gymnasium, a bridal shop and a janitorial supply store. Because the buildings pull up to the street, they create a definite sense of space for the area.

At the other end of town, that section of North Main Street near the old trolley barn retains the vestiges of what was once a pedestrian oriented commercial area. While the original façade of the old Duke Power Building has long since been replaced, the structure remains.

On West Innes Street, at its intersection with Statesville Boulevard and Mahaley Avenue, is another pre-war commercial area serving Catawba College and the Catawba Heights neighborhood. Today, these buildings house an insurance agency, a coffee house and a service station. Recent initiatives to redevelop one corner of the intersection for a new pharmacy have brought heightened significance to this intersection.

Also on the west side of town, at the intersection of West Cemetery Street and Old Mocksville Road, is the former Pope and Arey general store. Now vacant, this one story masonry structure once served the basic grocery needs for this part of Salisbury. It closed in the late 1980's.

Finally, east of the downtown, two historic commercial buildings anchor the intersection of Park Avenue and Boundary Street, across from Cannon Park. The first, a vacant one-story frame structure built in 1896, once housed the Cannon Mills Store. The second, a one-story brick building erected in 1916, housed Ruffy's grocery business until about World War II. It was subsequently used for a number of other businesses, but most recently has been used for storage. Both structures were recently purchased by the City of Salisbury for possible future use as a community facility.

Issues related to these early commercial areas revolve largely around economics and market area. While the downtown business district draws customers from a wide-ranging regional market base, other smaller

commercial areas outside the downtown area must often rely upon the immediate surrounding area for their economic survival. These businesses draw their economic strength from the neighborhoods near them— much like a tree draws its strength from the soil in which it grows. When the soil around the tree dries up or loses nutrients, the tree soon withers and dies.

In economic terms, the water and nutrients of a commercial area are the *disposable incomes* of the households within its drawing area. Therefore, actions to preserve and enhance the economic viability of older commercial areas must: (1) *increase the disposable incomes* of residents in the market drawing area, (2) *increase the numbers of households* within the same drawing area (i.e. increase or restore household density) or (3) *enlarge the drawing area* itself. Option (3) *enlarging the drawing area*, can be controversial for neighborhood serving businesses, if it draws vehicular traffic from outside the neighborhood area. Several of the recommendations contained in this section address one or more of these principles.

Note: In addition to this section on *Older Commercial Areas*, this plan also includes a separate chapter devoted specifically to *Downtown Salisbury* (See Policies D-1 to D-9)



THE HEALTH OF A TREE DEPENDS ON THE QUALITY OF THE SOIL IN ITS DRAWING AREA. THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF COMMERCIAL AREAS.

### ***Policies for Older Commercial Areas***

***Policy C-1: The preservation, rehabilitation and appropriate adaptive reuse of older commercial properties shall be encouraged. Such rehabilitation shall respect the original architecture and fabric of the building. Destruction or demolition of desirable older commercial structures shall be avoided.***

The City of Salisbury and Downtown Salisbury, Inc. have developed a consistent track record of providing financial and technical assistance in support of the City's older commercial areas. One example is the Municipal Service District Grant Program. This financial incentives program provides matching grants for building façade renovations, parking lot enhancements, sidewalk installations and other physical improvements to properties located within the downtown municipal service district. Each year, the program's \$25,000 to \$30,000 budget is quickly expended by businesses ready to take advantage of this matching grant money. (Also see the section on **Newer, Existing Commercial areas** for a discussion of the Innes Street Grant Program.)

Another local program offering financial assistance is the Low Interest Loan Pool administered by Downtown Salisbury, Inc. This \$2.1 million loan pool offers attractive, low interest rate (prime rate + 1/2) financing for physical improvements to properties in the downtown area.

In addition to financial incentives, the City and Downtown Salisbury, Inc. have been active in sponsoring special design workshops, special area plans, feasibility studies and other programs in support of downtown area revitalization. Even as this comprehensive plan is being prepared, the development of a new Master Plan for Downtown Salisbury is underway.

Not to be overlooked is Salisbury's strong tradition and track record concerning historic preservation. The City is recognized statewide and beyond for its efforts to preserve the historic integrity of much of the

community. Interestingly, however, nearly all of the City's preservation efforts to date have been geared toward the residential areas surrounding the downtown. Currently, there are no historic preservation controls in place over the City's older commercial areas. This has occasionally been a source of much consternation when an incompatible new commercial development comes in or when an historic structure is adaptively reused in a manner that is "unsympathetic", to say the least, to the original architecture of the building and surrounding properties.\*

Why should the City play such an active role in supporting its older commercial areas? The reasons are many. First, the downtown is easily the most visible part of Salisbury. It forms the basis for much of the community's pride; its condition is the most telling measure of how Salisbury views itself, and is viewed by visitors to the area. Second, the downtown business district provides a great variety of services and jobs close to where people live. Area residents at least have the option of getting to work or shopping without depending on the automobile. Reducing dependency on the automobile is not only beneficial in reducing traffic congestion, but also in lowering transportation costs for low and moderate-income households, where multiple car ownership can be financially crippling. Instead, money saved by diverting limited income from car payments, auto insurance, gasoline, and tires, can be better employed on property upkeep, food, clothing, education, and other beneficial uses.

*In the year 2000, it will cost the individual \$6,880 on average just to own and operate a typical new mid-sized car. (This is based on a car being driven 15,000 miles and traded in after 4 years or 60,000 miles)*

**Runzheimer International  
December 6, 1999**

There is also considerable public and private investment tied up in the downtown area: streets, sidewalks, utilities, and multi-story buildings make up a complex mixture of valuable real estate assets. Due to the compact development density, there is a relatively large percentage of the city's tax base contained in a comparatively small area. Therefore, for all these reasons, it is understandable that the downtown area should receive a high level of support for preservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

\*For more detailed information on this issue, see Policy C-3 below and Policy D-9 of the Downtown Salisbury chapter.

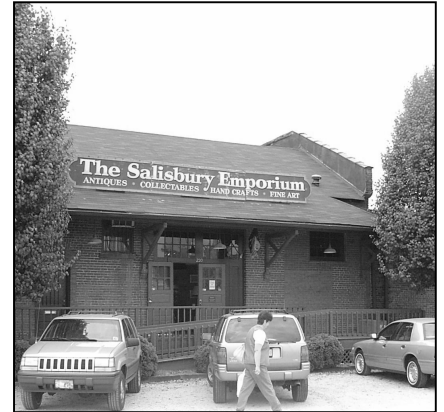
***Policy C-2: The City shall encourage a flexible, yet compatible development environment that supports new business formation and growth in the city's older commercial areas.***

Jane Jacobs, author of the classic Life and Death of Great American Cities, has noted that every city needs a part of town where small businesses, particularly new businesses, can "incubate" during their formative years. Older commercial areas, including downtowns in particular, often serve this important function. Many older commercial districts are constantly reinventing themselves, as new businesses come in and others move out. Downtowns are continually transforming themselves from one decade to the next. Spaces for small business start-ups can be as informal as a lone, second story "walk up" office space, or as formal as an organized business incubator with shared reception, conference, and business services.

A good example of a more formal incubator-type facility in the downtown area is the Salisbury Emporium, which occupies the former Frick Building. This organized facility houses about fifty retail shops and display spaces, providing a centralized showcase for a wide variety of antiques,

crafts, arts and other merchandise. Rental space at the Emporium includes the services of a central cashier. Thus, the Emporium provides low cost retail space and shared services to a great many businesses.

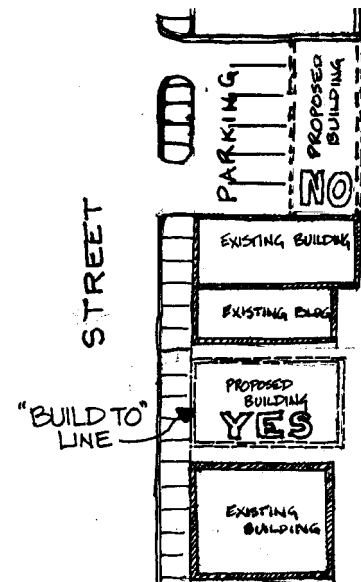
In addition to organized facilities like the Emporium, this plan recognizes that the City, Downtown Salisbury, Inc. and other involved organizations must continue their on-going support for a business environment that encourages small business development in the City's older commercial areas. The economic vitality of these areas requires flexibility in the types of uses permitted there, and in the administration of development standards governing their placement and activities. This does not mean to imply that historic preservation or design standards should be abandoned. (On the contrary, some of the most stringent design standards are found in suburban shopping centers.) Rather, it simply means that extra effort may be necessary on the part of City permitting officials to work constructively and creatively with proposed businesses to make their development plans work.



***Policy C-3: New development in or adjoining an older commercial area should be compatible with existing desirable development within its vicinity. Compatibility criteria shall include size, scale, massing, fenestration, rhythm, setback, materials, context, and landscaping.***

Given the economic competition that our older commercial areas face relative to newer suburban locations, it is sometimes tempting to accept any new development, regardless of its quality or compatibility with other buildings on the street. Experience shows that giving into this temptation is near sighted and should be avoided. Rather, it is the adherence to compatible design standards and an historic character of development that gives the downtown area its *best* competitive advantage. While businesses may come and go, it is the so-called “timeless architecture” of downtown Salisbury which gives it its staying power.

If there is a lesson to be learned from the failed downtown makeovers of the 1970's, it is that downtowns do best when they stay true to their original character. Closing streets or making them one way, and “slip covering” the fronts of buildings to make them something they were not intended to be, is a waste of resources. Furthermore, a building that is too wide, lacks windows, or is set back too far from the street, creates a *dead zone* for pedestrians, and further erodes the area's chances for *long term stability*. Instead, new buildings should pull up to the sidewalk (the “build to” line), and should have the same relative height, width, and proportionate door and window openings as others in the block.



This plan suggests nine criteria for reviewing proposed new developments in the City's older commercial areas\*. These nine criteria provide a working definition of the term “compatible” as used in this policy. The nine criteria and their meanings are:

1. Size: the size of the project relative to its site.
2. Scale: the scale of the building relative to those around it.
3. Massing: the proportion of the building's various parts to each other.
4. Fenestration: the placement of windows and doors.
5. Rhythm: the rhythm of the fenestration, recesses and projections.
6. Setbacks: the setback of the development relative to the setbacks of other properties in the immediate area.

7. Materials: their compatibility with materials used on existing properties in the area.
8. Context: the overall relationship of the project to its surroundings.
9. Landscaping: as a tool to soften and blend the project with the area.

These criteria might be effectively employed, for example, when reviewing site plans in conjunction with the approval of conditional use zoning districts.

\*Not coincidentally, these nine criteria are the same as those employed by Salisbury's Design Review Advisory Committee in reviewing development proposals in the City's local historic districts.

***Policy C-4: The pedestrian-oriented character of older commercial areas shall be preserved and strengthened.***



As stated immediately above, the unique, pedestrian-oriented character of an older commercial area is, perhaps, its greatest asset. Any plan to preserve or revitalize such an area, therefore, should take care to capitalize upon these pedestrian-scaled qualities. Pedestrian-oriented street improvements should include, for example, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, pedestrian-scaled streetlights, street trees, etc. This is especially important at locations where people are observed to naturally congregate.

"Convenience clusters" should be provided at transit stops to include benches, drinking fountains, shelters, shade trees, newsstands, information kiosks, or even local works of art. Finally, building architecture should support pedestrian comfort and interest, including the use of awnings and window openings in buildings, landscaping, and other amenities.

***Policy C-5: Off-street parking standards for older commercial areas may be reduced in light of compensating factors such as on-street parking, and walking or transit access. Efforts to correct inaccurate public perceptions of parking scarcity in older commercial areas shall be supported.***

On-street parking, uninterrupted by frequent driveways, is a highly efficient use of paved area. This is because the traffic lanes of the involved street also serve as the travel lanes for the on-street parking spaces. In contrast, an off-street parking lot requires an entirely separate set of travel lanes, thereby doubling the amount of asphalt necessary. While on-street parking may not be suitable for high-speed thoroughfares, it is quite appropriate along streets with modest speed limits. This description fits the character of most streets in Salisbury's older commercial areas.

Further, the fact that some portion of the customer base may visit these older commercial areas on foot or by transit, argues for relaxed off-street parking requirements in older commercial sections of Salisbury. It is only appropriate, therefore, that Salisbury's older, pedestrian-oriented commercial areas not be held to the same standards for parking as the City's new suburban commercial developments. Consistent with this logic, the City of Salisbury has designated virtually all of the downtown

municipal service district as exempt from parking requirements. Unfortunately, this same logic has not yet been applied to other older commercial areas outside the immediate downtown area.

Public perceptions of parking scarcity in older commercial areas are an interesting phenomenon. Most people take for granted, for example, a walk of a hundred feet or more from their car to the front entry door of a supermarket, “big-box” retailer, or indoor shopping mall. Once in the door, their purchase may involve a walk of several hundred more feet to retrieve their item(s), return to the cashier and walk back to the car again. Yet, in older commercial areas, people expect to be able to park directly in front of the store and walk just a few feet to retrieve their purchase. If they were to park just around the corner, they would be no farther away, and perhaps closer, than in the suburban shopping example. (Then, upon completing their purchase, they may very well drive to the health club and run on a treadmill to get some exercise.) Even so, the hue and cry heard in every city across America is “There’s no parking downtown”.

Interestingly, parking surveys that inventory available parking spaces downtown often show that this common perception is entirely false, particularly in small towns like Salisbury. Parking is usually available; it may just not be in the same block as the destination of the downtown shopper. So, rather than leveling another block of the downtown for an off-street parking lot, the money might be better spent educating the public as to the realities of parking availability within the downtown area.

***Policy C-6: Bicycle routes shall be planned and implemented to serve older commercial areas. Bicycle racks shall be encouraged at appropriate points of destination.***

Due to the proximity and convenience of older commercial areas to nearby residential neighborhoods, these areas are logical candidates for access by bicycle. In fact, older commercial areas often represent the last opportunities for children to experience a bike ride to the corner store for candy or ice cream, or to pick up a loaf of bread or gallon of milk for their family.

While the gridiron street network of the pre-World War II city typically provides many alternative routes for the bicyclist, there may be instances where planned bicycle facilities can be instrumental in making such trips on a bicycle safer or more convenient. Certainly, in laying out a master plan for bicycle routes in Salisbury, existing locations of neighborhood serving commercial uses should be taken into consideration. Regardless of whether a bicycle route leads to a commercial area or not, these older commercial areas should have bike racks placed in locations observed to be in common use by bicyclists.

What specific role can the City play in this? First, with regard to bicycle routes, the City can identify and provide signage regarding the best streets for bicycle travel. Such signage also puts motorists on notice that certain streets are specifically intended for shared use by the car and bicycle. Second, with regard to bicycle racks, the City can take the lead in providing for bicycle racks at public spaces and buildings. Further, the City can act as a catalyst for private sector action, by providing bicycle racks at or below cost to private businesses and other destinations. (Also see chapter on **Bikeways**.)



***Policy C-7: Initiatives to create living spaces over retail shops and offices shall generally be encouraged and facilitated, particularly in older commercial areas.***

A number of initiatives to create apartment spaces over commercial uses have been completed or are well underway in Salisbury. Examples include the Plaza at Main and Innes, 123 North Main Street, 113 East Council Street, and buildings in the 100 block of East Innes Street. In addition, the old Cheerwine Building has five new condominiums on the second floor, with several hundred square feet of commercial space available on the ground floor.

*"All we do here is to wait for each other to die. And each time we ask ourselves: 'Who will be next?' What we want is a touch of life. I wish we were near the shops and the bus station, where we could see things."*  
**Retirement Home Resident, 1956**



Apartments or condominiums over ground floor offices and shops have many advantages. First, the overall security of the area is enhanced in the evening, because people are present in the neighborhood around the clock. Second, such apartments may offer an attractive housing opportunity to certain individuals who desire to be close to work, shopping or services. The elderly, for example, may benefit greatly by having immediate access to the services available literally under their feet.<sup>1</sup> Such housing may also be convenient for employees who work in the shops below or nearby. Third, housing this close to shops and services reduces the need for multiple car ownership, a significant financial benefit to the residents. Fourth, the apartment dwellers above commercial businesses offer a ready source of disposable income to support businesses in the area. Fifth, under the right circumstances, such housing can often be provided at affordable levels because there are essentially *no additional land costs* involved.

Yet, in spite of the obvious benefits of creating such housing, those who choose to undertake such initiatives must often overcome many obstacles. Fire codes, for example, require two ways out of any residence, sometimes a challenge in older buildings. Building codes may require a minimum amount of window area and natural light in any room, sometimes a problem in buildings with a large perimeter. Finding available window openings may be further compounded along sidewalls that share a common wall with an adjoining building. Assigned parking in a commercial setting may be difficult to guarantee. Many of these challenges are established by State code, and are thus not within the power of City government to change. Those requirements and standards that are within the purview of local government, however, should be administered with a maximum spirit of cooperation and flexibility, within the bounds of protecting public health and safety.

<sup>1</sup> Some form of assistance in getting to the second or higher floors, such as an elevator or powered stair seat, may be called for in the case of some older senior citizens.



**Summary of Policies for Older Commercial Areas**

***Policy C-1: The preservation, rehabilitation and appropriate adaptive reuse of older commercial properties shall be encouraged. Such rehabilitation shall respect the original architecture and fabric of the building. Destruction or demolition of desirable older commercial structures shall be avoided.***

***Policy C-2: The City shall encourage a flexible, yet compatible development environment that supports new business formation and growth in the city's older commercial areas.***

***Policy C-3: New development in or adjoining an older commercial area should be compatible with existing desirable development within its vicinity. Compatibility criteria shall include size, scale, massing, fenestration, rhythm, setback, materials, context, and landscaping.***

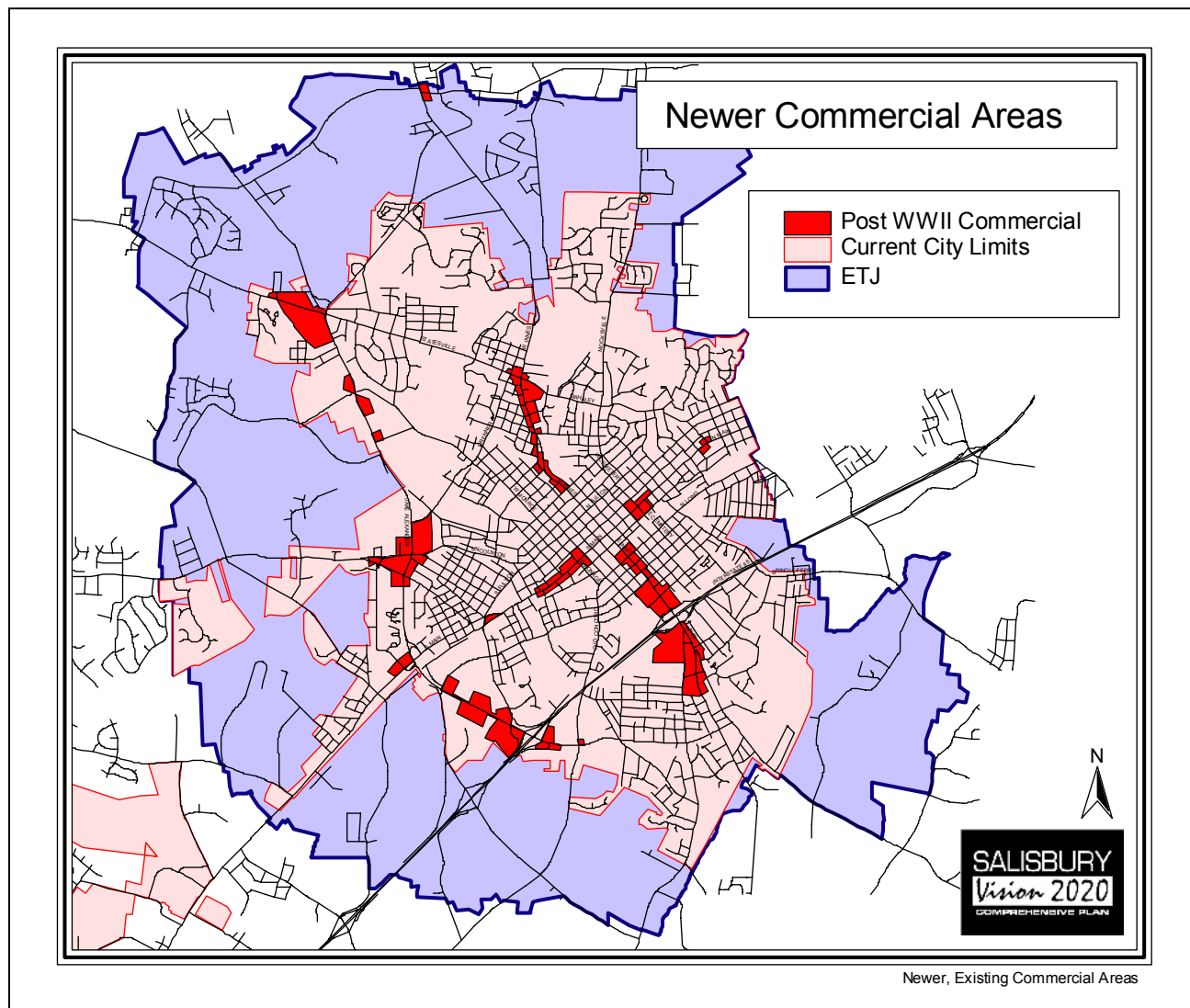
***Policy C-4: The pedestrian-oriented character of older commercial areas shall be preserved and strengthened.***

***Policy C-5: Off-street parking standards for older commercial areas may be reduced in light of compensating factors such as on-street parking, and walking or transit access. Efforts to correct inaccurate public perceptions of parking scarcity in older commercial areas shall be supported.***

***Policy C-6: Bicycle routes shall be planned and implemented to serve older commercial areas. Bicycle racks shall be encouraged at appropriate points of destination.***

***Policy C-7: Initiatives to create living spaces over retail shops and offices shall generally be encouraged and facilitated, particularly in older commercial areas.***

## THE NEWER, EXISTING COMMERCIAL AREAS



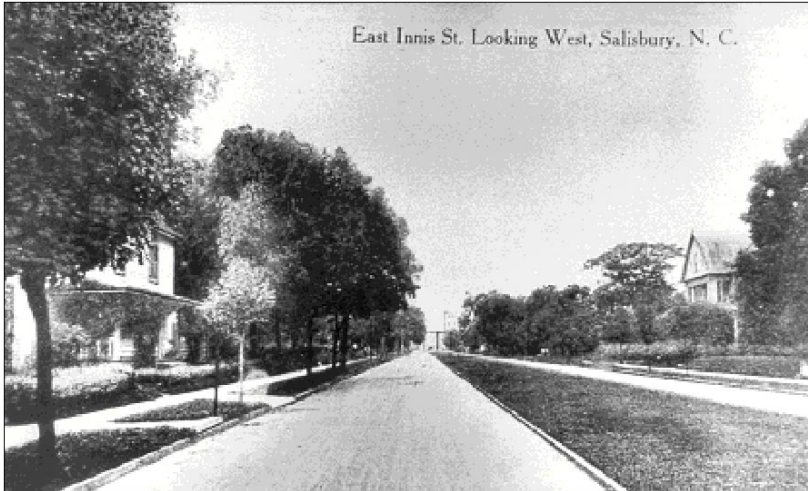
### Summary of Issues

*Stop the evolution of Jake Alexander Boulevard into East Innes! Control strip development!*  
**Citizen comment at Town Meeting for the Comprehensive Plan.**  
 May 4, 1999

In the town meetings held for this plan, “ugly, congested commercial strips” were identified by the public as among the most objectionable elements of Salisbury’s *unwanted future*. Unfortunately, this description includes most of the city’s commercial development from after World War II until the present day. Examples include typical highway commercial strips comprised of many individual businesses (e.g. much of East and West Innes Street), as well as areas with more organized shopping centers (e.g. Statesville Boulevard). Recent commercial strip development has continued to focus especially along Statesville Boulevard with Jake Alexander Boulevard following close behind.

What is it about these commercial strips that raise the ire of so many citizens in Salisbury, as well as in nearly every other city in America? Much of the ugliness and congestion may be directly attributed to dominant influence of the automobile, and the inhuman scale it fosters.

These factors include multiple driveway cuts onto adjacent streets creating traffic problems, overdone signage (intended to attract the attention of the motorist), excessive parking (designed to accommodate the largest peak-season crowds), and an overall scale and style of architecture that is incompatible with residential areas.



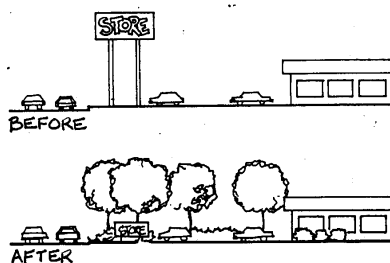
Perhaps nowhere in Salisbury has this issue reached a greater level of significance than along the East Innes Street corridor between Interstate 85 and downtown Salisbury. Once an attractive residential gateway into the heart of Salisbury, this section of Innes Street became a classic example of an “ugly, congested commercial strip”. Citywide concerns about this poor welcome mat for Salisbury culminated in a special planning and design charrette for the Innes Street corridor. As a result of the charrette, a host of recommendations were set forth to turn the area around.

Most recently, the City has been working on a carefully crafted set of development standards, specifically to address the problems along Innes Street. Entitled the Visual Corridor Overlay District (VCOD), this special section of the City's zoning ordinance will have jurisdiction whenever a property fronting on Innes Street is substantially redeveloped. The VCOD includes standards for building placement and design, parking, landscaping, lighting, and other design factors. Many of these standards are useful for correcting problems in the typical post-war commercial strip. Therefore, it should not be surprising that several of the policies contained in this section on newer, existing commercial areas, are wholly consistent with the objectives sought after in the VCOD.



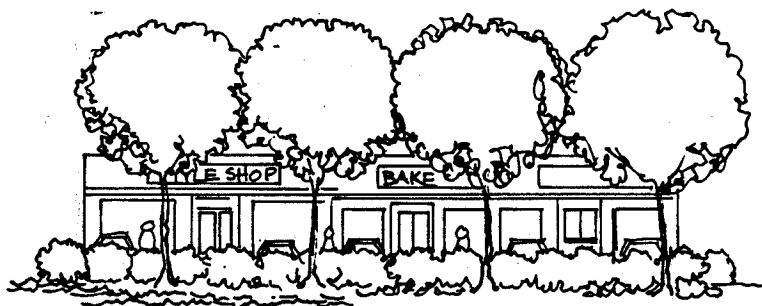
### ***Policies for Newer, Existing Commercial Areas***

***Policy C-8: The City shall encourage appropriate landscaping and reconfiguration of large, unlandscaped parking areas. Landscaped pedestrian walkways from car to store or across a parking area shall be encouraged.***



Among the factors that contribute most to “ugly, congested commercial strips”, perhaps none has a greater visual impact than the “sea of asphalt” parking lots that flank so many of the City’s major streets. While it is difficult at best to overcome the inhuman, automobile dominant environment created outside many of the city’s commercial strip stores, there are a couple things that can be done to soften the impact. One of these things is to introduce enhanced landscaping and pedestrian walkways into larger parking areas. Sizable shade trees, as opposed to ornamentals, (or as one citizen put it, “toy trees”) can break up the expanse of paving and provide beneficial shade over the extensive asphalt areas of large parking lots. Pedestrian walkways located in parking area median dividers can get people out of the driving lanes and onto shaded walkways. Certainly many of the city’s suburban parking lots, designed for seven days of peak holiday season traffic, have ample room to incorporate these human features. Pedestrian-scaled streetlights along these same walkways can draw people to them, and provide for safety and security in the evening hours.

In Salisbury, one example of an enhancement to an existing parking lot is the Ketner Center on West Innes Street. This project, supported in part by an Innes Street Grant, introduced a sidewalk along the Innes Street frontage of the lot and installed a landscaped planting strip behind the sidewalk. While the parking lot does not have a pedestrian orientation, the landscape strip along the road frontage provides an effective visual screen of much of the parking area behind it.

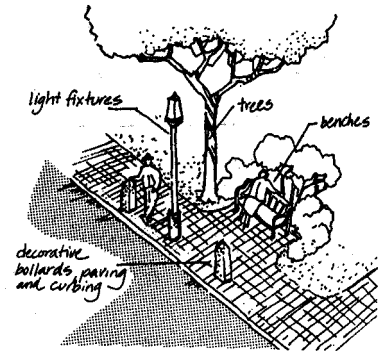


Another example of landscape improvements to an existing parking area is the former A&P Grocery Store on West Innes Street, now the site of Towne Pharmacy and the Kidney Dialysis Center. In this case, trees were brought in to soften the appearance of an existing parking lot.

Finally, it should be noted that many of the problems associated with the ugly, barren parking lots of the past have been done away with in new commercial developments being built in Salisbury today. Since the adoption of the City’s new Landscape Ordinance in 1997, new commercial developments have been required to install trees, perimeter landscaping, and when necessary, visual buffers between the commercial area and adjoining residential properties. Examples of recent developments that have followed the new landscape rules include the Innes Street Market, and Alexander Point Shopping Center.

**Policy C-9: The City shall encourage the provision of convenience clusters for pedestrians, bicyclists and taxi/bus riders at appropriate locations in existing commercial areas.**

Currently, the exteriors of the city's large-scale commercial shopping areas are designed almost exclusively for the individual automobile. If these areas are to be accessible by people walking, biking or riding the bus or taxi, human-scaled mini environments must be created at strategic locations suitable for the non-motorist. These "convenience clusters" should be located at designated bus stops/taxi stands and at walking/biking entry points from adjacent neighborhoods. Such convenience clusters should include, as appropriate, benches, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, shade trees, bike racks, bus schedules, etc.



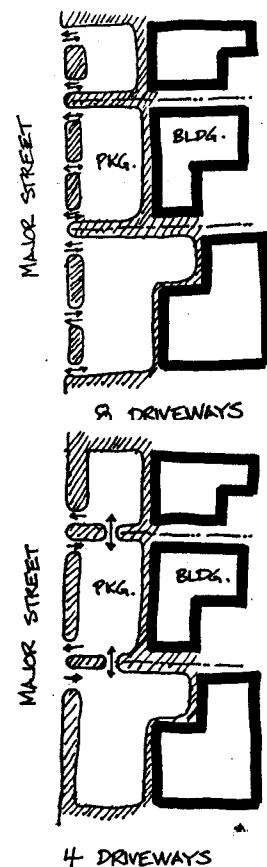
In Salisbury, the best example of what is meant by a *convenience cluster* can be found on Depot Street at the City's main transfer station for the bus system. Included at this location are three shelters, benches, a pay telephone, trash receptacles and shade trees. Further, the walls of the shelters are designed to serve as information centers for bus route information as well as for community information. It is unfortunate that these same types of amenities cannot be found at any of the city's newer, existing commercial developments.

**Policy C-10: The City shall encourage the consolidation of commercial driveways onto major streets and the connection of adjacent parking lots.**

It should come as no surprise that the number of driveways entering a major street has a direct impact on the ability of the street to move cross-town traffic. Each turning movement (and there can be *hundreds per business* during the course of the day) associated with an individual driveway slows traffic and creates the potential for a traffic accident.

One way to reduce this problem is to consolidate driveways as, for example, when three driveways can be reduced to two. This can be as simple as a single business replacing the existing apron of an extra driveway with a vertical curb. In other instances, it may call for two businesses coming together to share a common driveway along their property line.

A second, equally important way to reduce turning movements onto major streets is to encourage adjoining businesses to connect their parking lots. This allows the motorist/shopper to visit more than one business on the same side of the street without turning back onto the highway for short distances.



***Policy C-11: The City shall encourage businesses to replace existing, non-conforming signage with more attractive, conforming signage.***

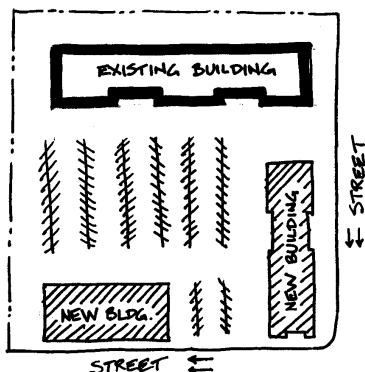
For years, the theory behind signage along major thoroughfares was to grab the attention of the fast moving motorist through bigger, brighter, taller, more animated signage. This “in-your-face” approach to commercial signage has often resulted in some of the most garish, visually offensive commercial strips.

As our society has matured, however, most people, including those attending the public input meetings for this plan, have come to dislike such signage. It has reached a point where, in most cities, motorists will drive out of their way to avoid the congestion and noxious appearance of such strips. Further, when giving directions to out-of-town friends, many people, if given a choice, will route their friends on roads that avoid such ugly strips. They would rather not have their friends see such an unsightly part of their town.



In the case of Salisbury, East Innes Street has been identified time and time again as the road section that gives first time visitors to Salisbury a very unattractive and unfortunate perception of what Salisbury really is.

To sum up, excessive, attention-grabbing signage is neither necessary nor attractive. Eventually, the jumble of overdone signage overwhelms the motorist to the point that he or she simply tunes out the entire mess of color and hype. Residents at the town meetings for this plan stated their concerns about ugly, strip development quite clearly. Ongoing efforts of the City to refine and implement better standards for signs should therefore be continued, with an eye toward phasing out much of the overdone signage along the city's major streets.



***Policy C-12: New infill development across the front street face of existing, over-designed parking lots shall be encouraged.***

Observations of many of the city's largest retail commercial areas reveal that parking lots are at least half empty during all but the peak holiday shopping days. (totaling about seven days, annually). This excess of asphalt is, more than anything else, a visual blight. It also adds to construction and maintenance costs, increases heat build up and storm water runoff, and reduces ground water recharge—all without adding anything to the character and quality of the city. This excess of parking affords an opportunity to place new commercial buildings along the street face of many commercial strips, thereby providing a sense of space to the street and visually containing off-street parking to the interior of the building cluster.

***Policy C-13: City policies and ordinances shall prohibit billboards within the planning jurisdiction of the City.***

Previous City Councils, drawing on the sentiment of the citizens of Salisbury, have acted to do away with pre-existing billboards and prevent the addition of others. At present, outdoor advertising signs exist in Salisbury only along federally aided highways, where Federal standards take precedence over the City's own local controls. These highways

include the I-85 highway corridor, US Highway 70 West, Jake Alexander Boulevard (which is US Highway 601) and US Highway 29.

In general, billboards have been deemed contrary to Salisbury's small town character and increasingly recognized emphasis on historic preservation and quality of life issues. In fact, the historic quality of Salisbury's downtown and surrounding historic neighborhoods are becoming one of the city's chief drawing cards for economic development. Billboards are inconsistent with that vision.

***Policy C-14: Bicycle and pedestrian access to newer, existing commercial areas shall be encouraged.***

As with the City's older commercial areas, the opportunity should be provided to the bicycling and walking public to gain access to the City's newer, existing commercial areas.

While the lack of a gridiron street network may limit the number of alternative access routes available to the pedestrian or bicyclist, there may nonetheless be instances where a planned walkway or bikeway could satisfy a real need.

Regarding pedestrian access, access to a commercial shopping center may simply require the installation of a sidewalk in place of observed worn paths. In the case of bicycles, the city's master bikeway plan should take major commercial centers into consideration when identifying bike routes. And, as with the older commercial areas, bike racks should be placed in locations observed to be in common use by bicyclists.

***Policy C-15: The City shall provide for technical and financial assistance to targeted commercial areas at critical locations.***

With so much emphasis given to the downtown area of Salisbury, it is easy to forget about the revitalization and redevelopment of other commercial areas in the city. This may be particularly important when addressing the major gateway corridors into Salisbury. A good example of this is the critical East Innes Street Corridor.

The Innes Street Grant Program has been successful in leveraging private sector investment in physical improvements to properties fronting on Innes Street. Funded at \$25,000 to \$30,000, this program has served as a catalyst for physical improvements to buildings and parking areas along this important entryway into Salisbury. In the future, the City may wish to give similar consideration to other commercial strips having a major impact on the image and quality of Salisbury.

***Summary of Policies for Newer, Existing Commercial Areas***

***Policy C-8: The City shall encourage appropriate landscaping and reconfiguration of large, unlandscaped parking areas. Landscaped pedestrian walkways from car to store or across a parking area shall be encouraged.***

***Policy C-9: The City shall encourage the provision of convenience clusters for pedestrians, bicyclists and taxi/bus riders at appropriate locations in existing commercial areas.***

***Policy C-10: The City shall encourage the consolidation of commercial driveways onto major streets and the connection of adjacent parking lots.***

***Policy C-11: The City shall encourage businesses to replace existing, non-conforming signage with more attractive, conforming signage.***

***Policy C-12: New infill development across the front street face of existing, over-designed parking lots shall be encouraged.***

***Policy C-13: City policies and ordinances shall prohibit billboards within the planning jurisdiction of the City.***

***Policy C-14: Bicycle and pedestrian access to newer, existing commercial areas shall be encouraged.***

***Policy C-15: The City shall provide for technical and financial assistance to targeted commercial areas at critical locations.***



## COMMERCIAL AREAS YET TO BE

### ***Summary of Issues***

New commercial uses, particularly those proposed for locations near a residential area, have traditionally been one of the biggest bugaboos for city planning. Nothing new, this problem dates back to the days of rampant real estate speculation and commercial expansionism prevalent in America beginning in the early 1800's.

The main challenge in the decades ahead will center on two issues: 1) the need to rethink and redesign new commercial areas to be more compatible with nearby residential areas and 2) once that is done, to overcome the built-in objections of the public that *any* new commercial use, close at hand, is automatically an objectionable intrusion.

To solve the commercial encroachment question, it is necessary to think of commercial uses in *two decidedly different categories*: (1) large scale commercial uses and, (2) smaller scale neighborhood businesses. The characteristics of each type of use, when properly designed and located, have profound impacts on the livability of the city and its inhabitants.

### ***Policies for Large Scale Commercial Areas Yet To Be***

With the widespread popularity of the automobile after World War II, large scale commercial uses underwent a marked transformation in their function and appearance. Before the war, large scale commercial uses tended to aggregate in our nation's urban centers, convenient to mass transit. The high price of central business district real estate required that they be many stories in height.

After the war, large-scale commercial uses first migrated to the enclosed suburban shopping mall. They became predominantly automobile dependent. More recently, "big box retailers" such as Wal-Mart and K-Mart have created their own critical mass, becoming the retail magnets of the 1990's and early 2000's. Consumer dependence on the automobile has become even more pronounced. At the same time, Internet sales loom on the horizon as the next major wave of change in the evolution of the retail market place.

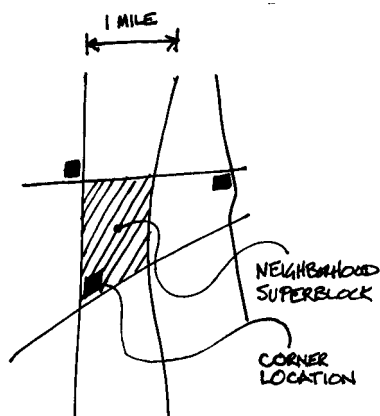
What will the large-scale commercial areas of the future be like? At least for the near future, it appears that the predominant influence of the automobile is not going to go away. This means that large scale commercial uses, with their seas of asphalt and cars are not generally going to be easily welcomed as neighbors to residential areas. For this reason, this plan recommends that large-scale commercial uses be accommodated in the urban fabric while working to lessen their negative impacts. The policies that follow therefore deal with both the practical functioning of such uses as well as their aesthetic influence on the character of the twenty-first century city.

***Policy C-16: Commercial or other development that would jeopardize the public health, safety, and welfare of an existing residential neighborhood shall not be permitted. However, new mixed-use developments, planned from the outset, which allow for a compatible mixture of uses with a pedestrian scale and design, are encouraged. Further, businesses may be approved adjoining (and therefore convenient to) an existing residential area, when such businesses can be shown to clearly satisfy design considerations similar to a newly planned, pedestrian-scaled, mixed-use development.***

The policies contained in this section deal primarily with the placement and design of large scale commercial uses developed in tandem with nearby developing residential areas. In this sense, they are intended to be planned in advance along with adjoining areas, rather than being “dropped into an area” after the area has already been substantially developed. In this way, appropriate consideration can be given to area-wide traffic patterns, transitional land uses, the need for landscaped buffers and other mitigating design features.

On occasion, however, there may arise a situation where a new development may serve as an appropriate addition to a neighborhood planning area. In such cases, it shall be incumbent upon the developer to demonstrate that (1) his proposal will provide a desirable service to the residents of the nearby neighborhood area(s) or (2) the design and scale of the proposed development will be compatible with the design and scale of the nearby neighborhood area(s). This last condition is the most difficult to achieve, given that “large scale commercial areas” are, by definition, not typically of a residential scale. (Also see Policy N-11 concerning the use of office and institutional development as a transitional land use between larger or more intensive commercial uses and residential areas and Policy C-20 below concerning the use of smaller scale buildings as a transitional use between large scale commercial and nearby residential areas.)

***Policy C-17: Large-scale commercial uses shall be located on the corners of neighborhood planning areas, that is, at the intersection of two major streets.***



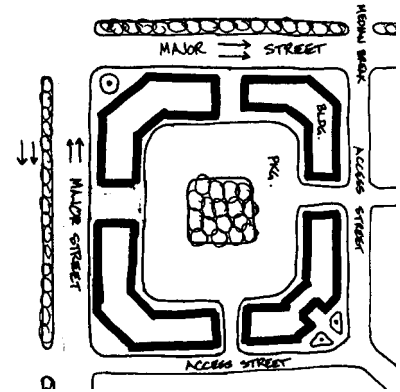
So long as traffic circulation and access receive careful attention, very large-scale commercial uses work best at the corners of neighborhood planning areas (i.e. where two major thoroughfares intersect). Large scale shopping centers, office complexes, manufacturing uses, and other large institutions are major traffic generators, usually drawing considerable amounts of cross-town traffic. By locating such uses at major intersections, motorists will find it more convenient to stay on major thoroughfares to get to these uses, rather than cutting through the narrow, pedestrian oriented neighborhood streets that this plan recommends.

Please note that not every corner of a neighborhood planning area need be taken up by large-scale commercial uses. Considerable relief can be gained by having some major intersections which are used for non-intensive development, including major parks, churches, residential development, etc.

***Policy C-18: New commercial buildings shall pull up to the street; parking shall be placed to the rear or side of the structure.***

As noted in the previous section, most of the city's major thoroughfares suffer from the sea of asphalt located to either side of the roadway. Parking lots dominate the street scene. As a result, commercial businesses have traditionally built large, colorful, pole-mounted signs as a substitute for the lack of business visibility at the street interface. By pulling commercial buildings up to the street, a sense of street enclosure is created and commercial signage can be incorporated into the design of the building itself. The ideal situation would be to arrange large-scale commercial buildings in a manner that would enclose an appropriately sized\* parking courtyard to the interior of an encircling building complex.

\*Note: In general, this plan advocates a reexamination and (hopefully) reductions in the amount of off-street parking required for most office, institutional and commercial developments. In the case of a few types of development, however, it may be necessary to actually increase the City's minimum parking standards. An example of this in Salisbury is the medical area complex where parking constraints have been a source of difficulty for many years.



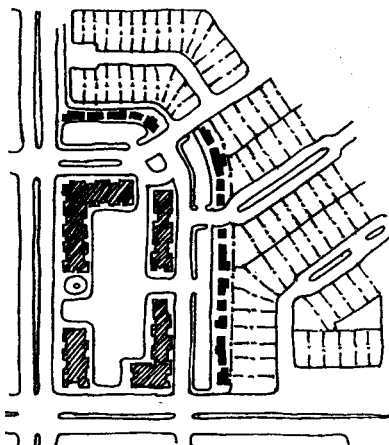
***Policy C-19: When appropriate, the use of all around architecture shall be required. That is, in some instances, it may be necessary to avoid designating a noticeable "service side" to a building, such as when a building abuts a residential or streetscape exposure, or other public space.***

Commercial architects and developers have demonstrated an ability to create commercial buildings that are equally presentable on all sides (e.g. consider the modern day shopping mall located in the midst of parking on all sides). This *all around* architecture should be encouraged, especially where a large-scale commercial use abuts an adjacent residential area. By providing for all around architecture, the commercial use presents a more attractive appearance from all sides. It also affords the possibility that residents of adjacent areas will be able to approach the place of employment, shopping or service from the interior of the neighborhood planning area, (traditionally the back side of buildings) thereby capturing more customers while reducing demand for parking.

***Policy C-20: In planning for a new mixed-use development, large-scale uses shall be buffered from adjacent residential areas by smaller scale buildings or by buffer strips. Regardless of the type of buffer, such uses shall be accessible from the neighborhood.***

Large-scale commercial developments are often buffered from adjacent residential areas by use of a substantial fence, wall, and/or planted buffer strip. The purpose of this fence or strip is to effect a total separation of the use from the adjacent residential area. The objective is to create a situation *as if the commercial use were not there at all*. As a result, people living within the adjoining neighborhood planning area must get into their cars and drive out onto the thoroughfare to reach a place of employment or shopping *which may be only a few hundred feet from their home*.

This plan recommends two ways to accommodate large-scale commercial developments so that nearby residential areas are protected, while allowing potential workers and shoppers from these neighborhoods to walk, bike or drive to the major use:



*First Method: Provide natural buffers, fences, and walls but penetrate them with pedestrian access ways.*

When plant material, fences or walls are created or preserved as buffer strips, they should include pedestrian and bicycle paths that *penetrate the buffer* from the adjacent residential area.

*Second Method: Use small-scale buildings as a buffer.*

Even better, a row of *residentially scaled and designed* commercial (office or retail) buildings may be positioned as a land use and building buffer between the large scale use and the residences to the interior of the neighborhood planning area. These buildings should be designed to blend easily with the scale and style of adjacent homes.

***Policy C-21: New large-scale commercial development shall provide for public transit stops and convenience clusters. Such clusters shall have pedestrian connections.***



Public transit stops (i.e. bus stops, taxi stands, etc.) should be an integral part of the design of large-scale commercial uses from the outset. Each stop should be outfitted as a convenience cluster including, for example, a bus shelter, shade trees, benches, drinking fountains, newspapers, etc. The nature and specific amenities associated with each convenience cluster should be commensurate with the nature and size of the commercial development being served. Further, such clusters should not be isolated from the development, but rather should have convenient pedestrian connections to the main activity areas of the development.

***Policy C-22: New large-scale commercial development shall have limited driveway access to major thoroughfares and shall connect adjacent parking lots.***

The problems created by numerous driveways entering a major thoroughfare were previously cited under the *Newer, Existing Commercial Areas* section of this plan. Certainly, the traffic circulation and street design of new major commercial developments should provide for a minimum of driveway cuts. In many situations, it may be necessary to give new commercial developments access only to intersecting streets or parallel service streets, from which access to the thoroughfare may then be gained. (See more on this in the Major Streets section.)

In addition, adjacent developments should be required to connect their off-street parking lots so as to encourage movement between uses without entering the thoroughfare. These parking lot connections should be made a condition for both new construction and redevelopment.

***Policy C-23: Large-scale commercial developments shall be encouraged, where appropriate, to contain a diverse mixture of retail, office, restaurant and service uses.***

The separation of land and building uses into single purpose office parks, shopping centers, light industrial parks, etc. contributes to unnecessary automobile traffic between uses. This can be no more evident than during the typical lunch hour traffic rush when workers in isolated employment complexes must get into their cars to get to a restaurant or do mid-day shopping errands. Small assembly operations, offices, retail shops, personal services, restaurants, post offices, and other uses should therefore be encouraged to locate in mixed use developments whenever possible.

***Summary of Policies for Large Scale, Automobile-Oriented Commercial Areas Yet To Be***

***Policy C-16: Commercial or other development that would jeopardize the public health, safety, and welfare of an existing residential neighborhood shall not be permitted. However, new mixed-use developments, planned from the outset, which allow for a compatible mixture of uses with a pedestrian scale and design, are encouraged. Further, businesses may be approved adjoining (and therefore convenient to) an existing residential area, when such businesses can be shown to clearly satisfy design considerations similar to a newly planned, pedestrian-scaled, mixed-use development.***

***Policy C-17: Large-scale commercial uses shall be located on the corners of neighborhood planning areas, that is, at the intersection of two major streets.***

***Policy C-18: New commercial buildings shall pull up to the street; parking shall be placed to the rear or side of the structure.***

***Policy C-19: When appropriate, the use of all around architecture shall be required. That is, in some instances, it may be necessary to avoid designating a noticeable "service side" to a building, such as when a building abuts a residential or streetscape exposure, or other public space.***

***Policy C-20: In planning for a new mixed-use development, large-scale uses shall be buffered from adjacent residential areas by smaller scale buildings or by buffer strips. Regardless of the type of buffer, such uses shall be accessible from the neighborhood.***

***Policy C-21: New large-scale commercial development shall provide for public transit stops and convenience clusters. Such clusters shall have pedestrian connections.***

***Policy C-22: New large-scale commercial development shall have limited driveway access to major thoroughfares and shall connect adjacent parking lots.***

***Policy C-23: Large-scale commercial developments shall be encouraged, where appropriate, to contain a diverse mixture of retail, office, restaurant and service uses.***

***Policies for Small Scale, Neighborhood Businesses Yet To Be***

*Note: Small scale, neighborhood businesses, are distinguished from other types of commercial uses by their location, market area, and physical design. They are located away from the cross town motoring public, have a market area limited to no more than one square mile, and are designed at a residential scale and style of architecture. Unlike large scale, automobile-oriented commercial developments, neighborhood businesses require a compact, densely developed neighborhood to bring a large number of households within walking or biking distance of the business.*

*If the problem of urban transportation is ever to be solved, it will be on the basis of bringing a larger number of institutions and facilities within walking distance of the home.*

**Lewis Mumford,  
January 1954**

***Policy C-24: Small scale, pedestrian-oriented shopping and work places shall be encouraged in the design of new neighborhoods.***

Future neighborhoods should provide the opportunity for at least some residents to work and/or conduct certain shopping errands within their neighborhood planning area. These residents should be able to walk or bike to their places of work. Similarly, small scale retail and service establishments should be carefully designed into the neighborhood planning area to allow some shopping trips to occur without getting out onto the major thoroughfare. Such service establishments should be housed in buildings that have a residential character and scale, and might include, for example, a neighborhood grocery store, walk up bank teller machine, automated post office, etc. While this will not reduce entirely the need for shopping and employment outside the neighborhood, it will nonetheless play a major role in reducing overall traffic on major collector streets.

***Policy C-25: Neighborhood serving businesses shall be encouraged to locate away from major thoroughfares.***

It is important that neighborhood businesses *not* be convenient to the cross-town motoring public. Their location on the interior of the neighborhood planning area, accessible only by relatively narrow neighborhood streets, and not on the way to anything else, will discourage their use by those who do not live within the neighborhood.

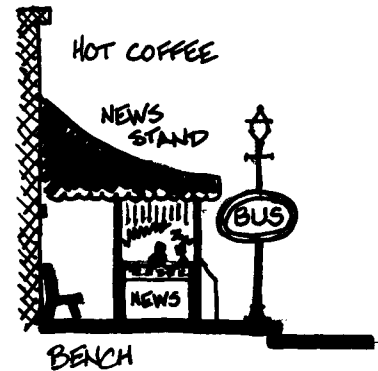
One important exception to this rule is when small scale mixed use businesses are employed as a buffer between a large scale, automobile-oriented development and nearby residences (See drawing of *Compact, Pedestrian-Oriented Neighborhood* for specific illustration).

***Policy C-26: Neighborhood serving businesses shall be designed at a residential scale and character.***

The height, width, setback, building materials, roof pitch, etc. of neighborhood businesses should be consistent with the scale and character of the residential area they serve. The square footage of these structures should also be limited so as to further discourage high volume, out of neighborhood business. The building in which the business is housed should be viewed as an interesting architectural asset to the neighborhood, rather than the typical visual blight associated with, for example, a modern day "convenience" store.

***Policy C-27: The location of neighborhood serving businesses shall be coordinated with transit stops and bikeways.***

Neighborhood businesses and small places of work should be located so as to reinforce and support the transit system and bikeway system. The sidewalk in front of a small-scale neighborhood store, for example, is a natural location for a bus stop. The bus rider can purchase a newspaper, a loaf of bread, a quart of milk, or whatever other incidental item they may need to pick up on their way home. Bicyclists may find such stores convenient places to stop for a cold drink or a snack. Further, by locating the transit stop close to small places of work, more people will be induced to ride the bus rather than drive their car.



***Policy C-28: Neighborhood serving businesses shall employ on-street parking in coordination with a limited amount of off-street parking.***

As noted previously, on-street parking can be highly effective in meeting the parking needs of small, pedestrian-oriented stores and businesses. By limiting the amount of off-street parking, the store or place of business is made less convenient to cross-town motorists, but no less accessible to the neighborhood resident on foot or bicycle. At the same time, the neighborhood business will be more compatible with the residential character of the area. Implementation of this policy will require that the City revise its off-street parking requirements to reduce the number of off-street parking spaces required for neighborhood serving businesses.

***Policy C-29: Neighborhood serving businesses shall be permitted to have only residential scale signage and lighting.***

Identification signage for the place of business can be relatively small and unobtrusive, since the store will not be designed or marketed to grab the attention of the motoring public. Rather, the store's business will come from those who live within the neighborhood planning area and are already aware of its convenience. Likewise, exterior lighting need be no greater than the kind of security lighting a resident might install on the corners of a house.

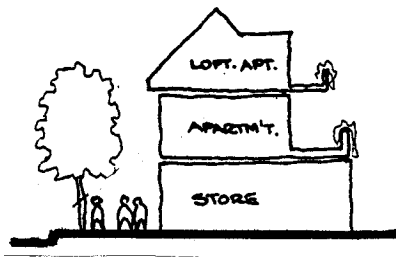


***Policy C-30: Neighborhood serving businesses shall be encouraged as an upfront, vertical infrastructure cost of new development.***

This recommendation is directed at the private sector developer and homebuyer. This plan holds that walkable/bikeable neighborhood services are just as essential to a neighborhood as water and sewer lines, or other infrastructure and amenities. In our present day, developers and homeowners associations do not hesitate to underwrite the costs of pools, tennis courts, clubhouses, etc. as a necessary first cost of development. In the real estate development business, a clubhouse would be referred to as *vertical infrastructure* while a sewer line would be part of the development's *horizontal infrastructure*.

This same kind of thinking should apply to the first costs of building space for neighborhood services, if necessary. Under this arrangement, the homeowners association could then lease the structure out at a rent that

*But even in districts, suburbs, parishes, and wards it is desirable that there should be some centre. There should be some place where the minor buildings of the district may be grouped and where a definite central effect on a minor scale may be produced.*  
**Sir Raymond Unwin, 1909**



the market and the economics of the store will bear. The neighborhood corner store manager would basically operate as a concessionaire, subject to the reasonable standards of the neighborhood association. In light of the rapidly expanding ranks of our senior citizen population, it is conceivable that one or more resident retirees would welcome the social and economic benefits of "running the neighborhood store".

***Policy C-31: Neighborhood serving businesses may be located near public amenities, when opportunity allows.***

The small corner store/transit stop is a logical location-mate for a public park, elementary school, etc. By aggregating several diverse but small-scaled uses into a single location, a convenient service center and natural neighborhood focal point is created for neighborhood planning area residents. Experience has also shown that public parks that are under the casual observation of nearby business owners have fewer vandalism problems and incidents of childhood mischief.

***Policy C-32: Living quarters shall be encouraged over small retail shops and/or offices.***

Another informal but effective way to exercise control over the use and activity of a neighborhood service business, is to provide for residential apartments in the floor(s) overhead. Such apartments provide for around-the-clock surveillance, and help assure that any neighborhood business is maintained at a level that is compatible with the neighborhood. Such apartments, by the way, convenient to a public park, neighborhood services, a transit stop, bikeway, and away from major thoroughfares present a highly desirable residence for someone who does not own (or chooses not to own) an automobile. Such units are also affordable, due in part, to the absence of land and infrastructure costs.

***Summary of Policies for Small Scale, Neighborhood Businesses Yet To Be***

***Policy C-24: Small scale, pedestrian-oriented shopping and work places shall be encouraged in the design of new neighborhoods.***

***Policy C-25: Neighborhood serving businesses shall be encouraged to locate away from major thoroughfares.***

***Policy C-26: Neighborhood serving businesses shall be designed at a residential scale and character.***

***Policy C-27: The location of neighborhood serving businesses shall be coordinated with transit stops and bikeways.***

***Policy C-28: Neighborhood serving businesses shall employ on-street parking in coordination with a limited amount of off-street parking.***

***Policy C-29: Neighborhood serving businesses shall be permitted to have only residential scale signage and lighting.***



***Policy C-30: Neighborhood serving businesses shall be encouraged as an upfront, vertical infrastructure cost of new development.***

***Policy C-31: Neighborhood serving businesses may be located near public amenities, when opportunity allows.***

***Policy C-32: Living quarters shall be encouraged over small retail shops and/or offices.***

*...we must challenge the whole theory of segregation upon which so many American communities, not least those that call themselves 'progressive,' have been zoned: zoned so that one-family houses and apartment houses, or row houses and free-standing houses, cannot be built side by side; zoned so strictly for residence that in many suburban communities one cannot buy a loaf of bread or a tin of tobacco without going a mile or two by car or bus to the shops. The pernicious effect of this kind of zoning was first adequately characterized by the American Institute of Architects as far back as 1924, and time has abundantly proved all its contentions.*

***Lewis Mumford, May 1956***

This page left blank intentionally